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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5560  
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 002844

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/12/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [AU](#) [EU](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: DARFUR: AMIS/EU INVESTIGATIVE TEAM DETAINED,  
THREATENED

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief E. Whitaker, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) On December 9, unidentified armed men attacked a commercial truck convoy near Sirba, West Darfur, killing 22 people and injuring 10 others. The same day, a combined AMIS/EU team of two military observers and six protection force personnel flew, in an MI-8 helicopter, from El Geneina to Sirba, to investigate the incident. Upon arrival, locals escorted the members of the team to the scene. After completion of their work, however, the large crowd grew hostile and detained the team. According to one of the EU Military Observers (Mil Obs), an armed man who appeared to be intoxicated, approached the UK Mil Obs and demanded he carry back to El Geneina the head of one of the dead from the attack to prove the atrocity had happened. When the Mil Obs refused, the armed man threatened that if he did not, then he would be killed. On several occasions, the armed man placed the barrel of his weapon under the protective vest of the Mil Obs, threatening to shoot him. The Mil Obs, afraid for his life, relented to the demand and carried the head around in a bag throughout the ordeal.

¶2. (C) Sudanese police arrived thereafter and intervened to extract the team from the situation. The police took the team to the Sirba police station, where they spent the night. In the morning, the police, National Redemption Front (NRF) representatives, and local leaders persuaded the armed group to let the team return to El Geneina via their helicopter. They returned minus their weapons and some equipment, which included five AK-47 assault rifles, an unspecified amount of ammunition, one Thuraya cellular phone, one medical pack, and three helmets with night vision goggles.

¶3. (C) Comment: The series of hostilities involving AMIS over the past week -- an assault on a sector base resulting in two civilian deaths by AMIS in self-defense and the unsolved hijacking of an AMIS vehicle/kidnapping of two AMIS personnel -- represent a new threshold, a serious decline in respect for the ceasefire monitoring body and its members. Discontent with the inability of AMIS to protect civilians and the growing perception of AMIS as a soft target leave Military Observers -- including those from the U.S. -- and others in Darfur at greater risk. In fact, U.S. and UK Mil Obs are becoming a target.  
HUME